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U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, September 19, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Store Your Garden Harvest." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

September is too early in the fall to begin storing away the harvest for winter, but it's not too early to begin thinking about it. And it's not too early to talk about it. And it's not a day too early for you to sit down and send for the government's free bulletin on "Home Storage of Vegetables." This bulletin you can order by number as well as by name. It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 879. And it is free to anyone who is saving the garden for winter meals this year.

Back in early days most houses had their own storage cellars or outdoor storage buildings. And most households stocked up in the fall with barrels of apples, with potatoes, onions, winter squash, cabbages and so on to take them over the cold weather.

Sometimes the food that was stored lasted well. Sometimes it shriveled and dried up. Sometimes it decayed. The scientists who have studied this matter of storing garden food say that keeping isn't a matter of luck at all. It's a matter of storing the right kind of products in the right condition and having the right environment for them. Different vegetables need different storage conditions. Some last best in a dry, warm place. Some need a cold, dry place. Still others need a cold, moist place. But they all need ventilation.

The experts say that beans and onions keep just as well, or probably better, in the attic or the garage instead of the cellar. The reason is that beans and onions happen to need a cold, dry place.

Pumpkins and squash, however, stay in better condition in the cellar near the furnace. Why? Because they need a warm, dry atmosphere.

But the root crops, like beets and carrots or parsnips, salsify, turnips or celery need a cool storage place. For such vegetables you need a special little storage room partitioned off in your basement where the air will stay cold even while your furnace is going. You can build such a storage room yourself using fiber board for the walls.

Celery and cabbage keep best in moist, cold air. So store them in crates on the floor of your storage room and keep the floor covered with dirt or sand.

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The experts tell me that storage -- like canning and drying -- is only successful if you use good-quality vegetables. The best storage conditions in the world won't make poor vegetables anything but poor vegetables. Put away only the vegetables that are well-grown or mature, but neither old nor tough. Don't try to store any that have cuts, bruises nor insect spots. Any imperfect vegetables are likely to decay and often to cause those around them to spoil. Start with good products, handle them carefully, and store them under the right conditions. Then they'll keep a long time.

In general, the storage experts tell me that the four points of successful storage are: First, store only the kind of vegetables that will keep this way. Never try to keep juicy vegetables or greens in storage. Second, see that every product you put in storage is in good condition, ripe but not too ripe, and without blemishes. Third, have the temperature and moisture that suits each different kind of vegetables. Fourth, allow for ventilation during storage.

There are the main points about successful storage. Now one or two additional suggestions. If you're going to store a large amount of your garden harvest, you'll find a thermometer for your storage room a good investment. Then you can tell just exactly what temperature your vegetables are living in. The root crops like carrots and turnips as well as cabbage and celery need a temperature from 32 to 38 degrees F. That's right around freezing. On the other hand, sweetpotatoes, squash and pumpkins need a temperature of 80 to 85 degrees to start out with. This will harden and dry their outside surface, you see, and make a protective covering. After that they keep best at about 50 to 56 degrees for the rest of the winter. Set pumpkins and squash in rows on shelves so they won't come in contact with each other.

White potatoes stay in best condition if you keep them at from 45 to 50 degrees.

If you have an outdoor storage pit or building, that's probably the best place to keep your cabbages and turnips. In the cellar, these vegetables often give off odors that penetrate the entire house.

Finally, a word about storing apples. Apples and white potatoes require about the same conditions. Avoid very low or very high temperatures. They'll do best at from 45 to 50 degrees. You can keep them in the storage room in the basement, outdoors in storage cellar, or even in banks or pits. If you are storing many apples, put part of the crop in the cellar and the late-keeping varieties for spring use in outdoor banks or pits.

And once more, if you want all the details about successful storage, write the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C., for its free bulletin.

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